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HGZine

Issue 1 | March 2007

**WIN
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HUGE PSP REVIEW!

Sid Meier's Pirates!

Walk the plank with the strategy legend

THE BIG FIGHT!

Mario vs Donkey Kong 2

A tenner on the giant monkey



Driver '76

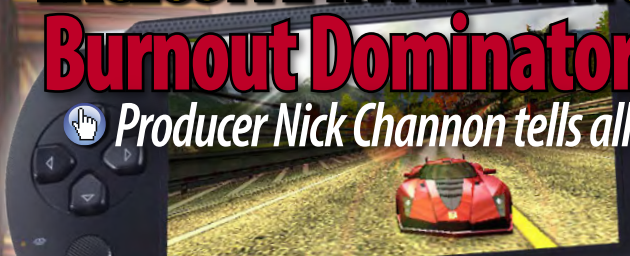


Exclusive screenshots
and interview

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW!

Burnout Dominator

Producer Nick Channon tells all



FULL REVIEWS!

PSP



Ghost Rider
Highway from hell

DS



Castlevania
Portrait of a classic

PSP



Dungeon Siege
Hack'n'-slash heaven

PLUS!
The latest mobile
games revealed
and rated



Welcome to HGZine

Hello and thanks for downloading HGZine – which, as you're probably already aware, is a new monthly magazine dedicated to handheld games. You may have seen one of our sister publications, 360Zine or PCGZine. Well, we'll offer the same explosive mix of previews, interviews and expert reviews, all wrapped up with tons of video and interactive elements. Videogame mags rarely give handheld titles the space or attention they richly deserve so we're here to redress the balance.

And our debut issue gets off to a nitrous oxide-fuelled start with exclusive interviews from the Burnout Dominator and Driver '76 teams, before charging headfirst through strategy star Pirates!, platform legend Mario vs. Donkey Kong 2 and the latest goth romp from the Castlevania series. Hold on tight...

Keith Stuart, Editor
HGzine@gamerzines.com

READER FEEDBACK!
Click here to tell us what you think of the first issue!

DON'T MISS!
This month's highlights

PSP

Sid Meier's Pirates

MUST-SEE REVIEW It's a tactical treasure chest! PAGE 20

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Mario vs Donkey Kong 2

Plumber vs primate! P23

PSP

Burnout is back

Producer Nick Channon provides an MOT. P17

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World of Pokémon

How Wi-Fi will change Pokémon forever. P12

PSP

Driver 76

Exclusive new screens! PAGE 14

WIN GAMES!
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QUICK FINDER

Every game's just a click away!

SONY PSP

Manhunt 2
Call of Duty: Roads To Victory
Driver '76
Burnout Dominator
Pirates!
Ghost Rider
M.A.C.H.
Dungeon Siege: Throne of Agony
PSP News Roundup
PSP Reviews Roundup
NINTENDO DS
Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass
Pokémon Diamond and Pearl
Mario vs .Donkey Kong 2

Castlevania:

Portrait of Ruin
Bomberman Land Touch
DS News Roundup
DS Reviews Roundup
MOBILE PHONE
News
Reviews



MEET THE TEAM

Probably the best games writers on the planet

Ed Fear

Japanophile newshound Ed braves his fear of small creatures to study Pokémon.

Dave Harrison

Games Master and PSM3 veteran; this month taking Ghost Rider for a spin.

Robert Howells

The journalist and radio presenter faces ruin. That's Portrait of Ruin, of course.

Adam Norton

Another Games Master regular. Kicking Bomberman Land into Touch for us.

Mark Wallbank

Pipe-smoking ex-Edge staffer living out his Top Gun fantasies with M.A.C.H.

Simon Parkin

Edge, NGC, OPM and 360 writer now wannabe pirate. Or dungeon keeper.



PSP

Manhunt 2

The horror comes to handheld.

Publisher: Rockstar**Developer:** Rockstar**Heritage:** GTA 1-4**Link:** www.rockstargames.com/manhunt2/**ETA:** Summer 2007

What's the story?

Rockstar's controversial murder-'em-up is stalking back into our lives this summer. Whatever you thought of the incredibly dark original, Rockstar's GTA Vice City and Liberty City Stories games have been amongst the best on PSP so the prospects are intriguing.

What do we know?

As usual the publisher is keeping its bloodstained cards close to its chest. "We have tried to create a game that stays close to the original concept of chilling suspense and stealth, whilst pushing the game design and storytelling forward," says Rockstar founder, Sam Houser. The trailer certainly suggests a much more recognisable videogame plot, with a character named Daniel Lamb forcibly contained in a mental asylum and determined to escape. No psychotic movie directors barking murderous orders at death row escapees here then.

Development is being handled by the new Rockstar London studio, although Rockstar Leeds and Rockstar North are also overseeing the project. How's everything going? Well, the publisher *has* just started showing code off so things are clearly progressing nicely.

When do we get more?

Screenshots in next month's issue. Fingers crossed...

Anything else to declare?

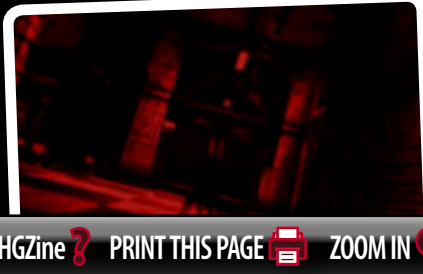
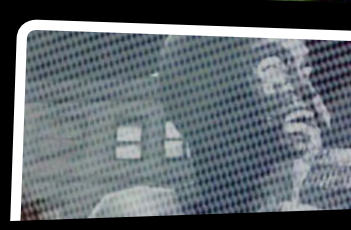
It's been widely reported that a version of the game was previously in production at Rockstar's Vienna studio but this closed last year. It's not clear whether Rockstar London has started again from scratch.

The Manhunt 2 trailer jump cuts through a typically nightmarish plot.

"Forcibly contained in a mental asylum and determined to escape"



MANHUNT 2
TRAILER
Click right here if
you dare...





 REPLAY THIS VIDEO

His soul locked in perpetual servitude, Johnny Blaze lights up the night skies as his alter ego, the Ghost Rider.

But now he must protect others from experiencing his hell on earth.

And bring the demon fires of hell to villains like Blackheart, Vengeance and Scarecrow...

To protect the life-and soul-of his love, Roxanne.



**"We should be grateful
for something that
restores our faith
in comic heroes"**

PlayStation 2
OFFICIAL MAGAZINE-UK

PLAY THE EXCLUSIVE ALL-NEW STORY

- All-new story from comic masterminds Garth Ennis and Jimmy Palmiotti.
- Deadly combat with Marvel arch-nemeses-on foot or on the Hellcycle.
- Loads of unlockables including classic Ghost Rider comics, "making of" footage and more.
- Wireless multi-player motorcycle deathmatch for up to four players on PSP®(PlayStation®Portable) system.

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PlayStation 2

PSP
(PlayStation Portable)

GAME BOY ADVANCE

COLUMBIA PICTURES

MARVEL

2K

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Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: Nintendo
Heritage: Are you kidding?
Link: www.nintendo.com
ETA: TBC

DS



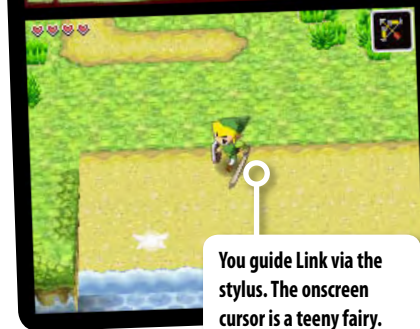
The map can be dragged down to the touchscreen so you can add your own notes and diagrams.



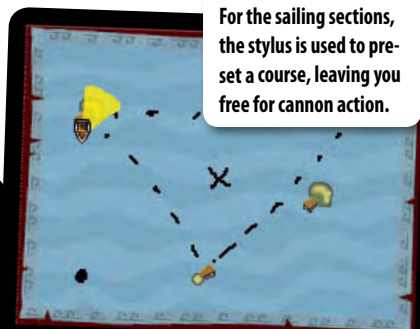
Boss battles are so big they take up the top and bottom screens.



You guide Link via the stylus. The onscreen cursor is a teeny fairy.



For the sailing sections, the stylus is used to pre-set a course, leaving you free for cannon action.



The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass

Link is back... but back where?

READER REQUESTS!
Click here to tell us what you want to see in Zelda!

What's the story?

Grown men fainted with delight when Phantom Hourglass was unveiled at last year's Game Developer's Conference. This madly anticipated instalment marks Zelda's first appearance on Nintendo DS and if it's not one of the games of the year we'll eat our ocarina of time!

What do we know?

Hourglass is billed as a sequel to the Game Cube Zelda adventure, Wind Waker, and employs the same candy-bright cell-shaded graphics as its syrupy predecessor. Link has become lost at sea and must somehow track down his old pal Tetra. And that's about all we know for sure.

The control system makes full use of the stylus – in fact, no button presses are needed. You guide Link by tapping where he needs to go or prodding on the enemies you want him to attack. Doors can be unlocked by drawing the correct symbol on them, and you can plot a course for your boomerang or even your ship by drawing a line on the screen. The video footage we've seen also hints at epic, seafaring cannon battles, using the stylus (again) to get your trajectory just right.

When do we get more?

Nintendo is likely to reveal more at this year's GDC in March where producer Eiji Aonuma is giving a speech on the history of Zelda. Miyamoto will also be talking at the event. We'll have all the Phantom Hourglass titbits next issue!

Anything else to declare?

There's a fun two-player Wi-Fi battle arena game, which looks a bit like Pac-Man: one player controls Link trying to navigate through a small maze, while the other guides enemy ghoulies to try and stop him.



"If it's not the game of the year we'll eat our ocarina of time!"

Call of Duty: Roads to Victory

Duty calls once again – and this time it's portable.

What's the story?

The blockbusting Call of Duty series makes its handheld debut, this time following the fortunes of three fighters – an 82nd Airborne Division infantry soldier, a Canadian First Army rifleman and an elite British Parachuting Regiment commando – as they battle toward the eventual liberation of Paris. It's all new content, freshly designed for PSP.

What do we know?

The single-player game features 13 missions taking in an array of typically chaotic set-pieces. There are attacks on machine gun placements, tense sniper face-offs and even aircraft sections where you man gun turrets and protect bombers from enemy fire. Developer Amaze Entertainment has worked hard to retain the feel of a console COD title, so there'll be two or three allied soldiers with you at all times, helping out and commenting on the action. The control system has been simplified with the addition of an auto-aim feature, which means players don't need pinpoint accuracy. Every action needs an equal and opposite reaction, though, so expect a huge onslaught of enemy soldiers.

Of course, no Call of Duty title would be complete without multiplayer. Roads to Victory supports up to six players in a variety of Ad-Hoc modes including old favourites Deathmatch and Capture the Flag.

When do we get more?

The game is due out at the end of March so we're hoping for either finished code or extremely advanced preview material in the next issue of HGZine!

Anything else to declare?

Expect plenty of replayability to make up for the shorter handheld-friendly missions. Extra weapons, vehicles and other goodies can be unlocked by going back and really scouring those levels.

As in the console titles you'll be accompanied by allied troops who'll help out when needed.

"13 missions taking in an array of typically chaotic set-pieces"

Roads to Victory introduces new ideas like aircraft sections where you shoot down enemy planes.

It's Call of Duty so expect vehicle-based sections as you belt across the warzone.

CALL OF DUTY

Publisher: Activision

Developer: Amaze

Heritage: Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest, Lord of the Rings: Tactics, Eragon

Link: www.callofduty.com

ETA: March

PSP

Missions take place throughout the European theatre as WWII wears on.



INTERACTIVE CONTENT
Brand new Roads to Victory trailer!



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FOR THE PSP® (PLAYSTATION®PORTABLE)



PSP
PlayStation Portable



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PSP

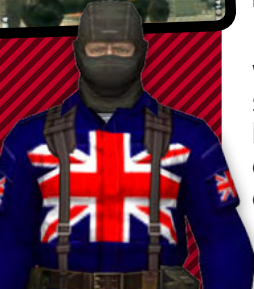
Incoming

Coming soon to your handheld

Metal Gear Solid: Portable Ops

Publisher: Konami | ETA: April 5

They're calling it the best PSP game ever in the States – a brilliant stealth shooter, with short, sharp missions, excellent Wi-Fi support and a strong plot. Europe has been kept waiting but the reward will be extra content including new game maps, characters and missions. Essential.



Hellboy

Publisher: Konami | Eta: Autumn 2007

It's hellish hack-n'-slash slaughter all the way in Krome Studios' adaptation of the blockbusting comic book series. A context-sensitive combat system promises varied fight action as you charge through the 3D environments on the trail of bonkers super villain Hermann von Klempt. Destructible scenery means instead of punching enemies you can always topple a wall on them. Handy.



Ratchet and Clank: Size Matters

Publisher: Sony | ETA: March 30

The boys are back, bringing their own brand of gag-splattered platform adventuring to PSP for the first time. Here, they're up against a race of mad inventors known as the Technomites, in an epic jaunt across the galaxy. New mega-weapons join old faves like the Blitz Cannon and Agents of Doom, and there's a progressive armour system to add an RPG feel. Oh, and loads of Ad-Hoc and Infrastructure multiplayer treats are assured.



Castlevania: The Dracula X Chronicles

Publisher: Konami | ETA: Winter 2007

The latest addition to Konami's gothic horror series is a 3D remake of Castlevania: Rondo of Blood originally released on the cult PC Engine console and never before available in the UK. Taking the role of vampire slayer Richter Belmont, players must defeat evil blood-sucker Dracula, unlocking a precise port of PlayStation classic, Castlevania: Symphony of the Night and the original Rondo of Blood along the way.



After burner: Black Falcon

Publisher: Sega | ETA: March 30

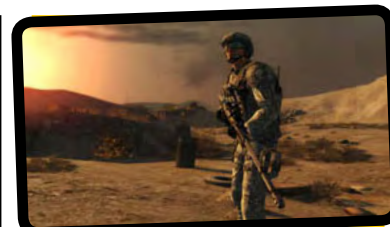
The arcade flight shooter is preparing for a Spring landing. Boasting 19 real-life aircraft, a tonne of weapons, and a juicy plot involving mercenaries who steal jet planes, it looks like business as usual for the dogfighting classic. As well as 13 single-player missions there's a host of multiplayer options so you can, quite literally, shoot your mates down in flames. Look out for Codemasters' rival aircraft blaster, Heatseeker, also due in March...



Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2

Publisher: Ubisoft | ETA: March 30

The intelligent man's military shooter sneaks back to action, this time in a futuristic Mexico where civil war is threatening to spill over to the US – unless the advanced warfighters can stop it. Newly tuned AI, increased vehicle support (including air raids) plus complex battle environments with real-time weather and day/night cycles top the new features list.



Harvest Moon: Innocent Life

Publisher: Rising Star | ETA: March 30

The farming series finally makes its European debut on PSP in March. Innocent Life represents a break from tradition, taking you out of the usual village setting and onto a small island where you must explore ancient relics and emotionally connect with the natives to solve a mystery. Still lots of crop growing and fishing though, so don't panic!



ROUGH CUTS

More PSP games...



COMING SOON

Call of Duty: Roads to Victory (March 23)... Tony Hawk's Project 8 (March)... Dungeons and Dragons Tactics (March)... Capcom Puzzle World (March)... UEFA Champions League (March)... Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six: Vegas (March)... Prince of Persia Rival Swords (March)... Virtua Tennis 3 (March)... Championship Manager 2007 (March)... Elder Scrolls Travels: Oblivion (TBC)...

DS

iNCOMING

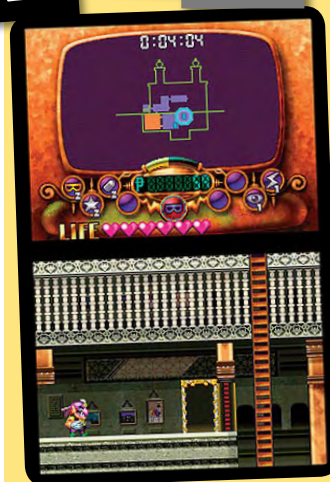
Coming to a dualscreen near you!



Diddy Kong Racing DS

Publisher: Nintendo | ETA: Spring

Mario Kart remains one of the best titles on DS, but this conversion of Rare's N64 racer might give it a fun run for its money. Already released in the States, and due in Europe this spring, it boasts 38 tracks, upgradeable vehicles, Wi-Fi multiplayer and a story-led adventure element. Much more than just another comedy karting romp, then.



Wario: Master of Disguise

Publisher: Nintendo | ETA: TBC

Wario takes a break from his Wares series to go back to his roots and star in a typically offbeat 2D platformer. This time, he's gatecrashed the TV show of a superstar thief, stolen the poor guy's quick-change wand and must now explore ten global environments, using cunning disguises to solve puzzles and unlock treasure. There's lots of interesting stylus use, including drawing symbols on Wario to make him change costumes.

Harvest Moon DS

Publisher: Rising Star | ETA: Spring

The laid-back farm-'em-up is set to arrive in the UK after a loooong delay. About time as a second DS title - Harvest Moon: The Island I Grew Up On - is due this year too. As usual it's all about planting seeds, tending the land and petting your animals. And while you're not collecting eggs, milk and wool you need to make friends and find true love. No, there's no shooting.



ROUGH CUTS

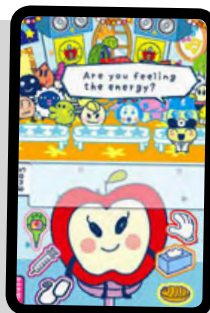
More DS games...



Tamagotchi Connexion: Corner Shop 2

Publisher: Atari | ETA: March

The latest Tamagotchi shop sim is almost ready to open in Europe, a few months later than planned. Once again, you need to set up and run your store, competing in mini-games and ensuring customers are happy. The sequel features new shops including a Bowling Alley and Sushi Bar as well as a revised Gotchi points system. Plus, Wi-Fi support lets players swap gifts and treats.



Theme Parks DS

Publisher: EA | ETA: March 23

Although EA has closed its Japan studio, the team finished this conversion of the classic PC sim before getting the chop. Phew. As in the original, the idea is to construct an amusement park that attracts loads of happy punters, and keeps them coming back for more. The point-and-click interface has been adapted for stylus, and EA is promising depth and accessibility.



Konami Arcade Classics

Publisher: Konami | ETA: Autumn

You can't leave your house these days without being assaulted by classic game collections, but when your history is as glorious as Konami's you're allowed to wallow. So here are 15 precise translations of legendary titles including Yie-Ar King Fu, Gradius and Time Pilot. Original screen resolutions are supported so you can turn your DS on its side for those vertical scrollers.

Final Fantasy III

Publisher: Square Enix | ETA:

Spring/summer

It's set to be a busy year for Final Fantasy fanatics. Following this 3D update of the groundbreaking 1990 classic we'll get the Final Fantasy XII sequel, Revenant Wings, and a follow-up to the Game Cube adventure, Final Fantasy: Crystal Chronicles, subtitled, Rings of Fate. Confused? Okay, we'd better not mention the Final Fantasy V remake coming to GBA next month. Oops, too late.



COMING SOON

Rayman Raving Rabbids (March 16)... Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles (March 23)... Bobble Bubble Double Shot (Month 23)... Gunpey DJ (March 30)... Yu-Gi-Oh GX Spirit Caller (March 30)... Pokémon Ranger (March 30)... Zendoku (April 5)... Lost In Blue 2 (April)... Lifesigns: Hospital Affairs (Spring)... Time Ace (Spring)... Honeycomb Beat (TBC)... Chibi Robo Park Patrol (TBC)...

MOBILE NEWS

All the latest from the world of mobile phone gaming



Phoenix

Phoenix Wright

Publisher: Capcom | ETA: March

Yes your honour, the brilliant Nintendo DS courtroom sim is coming to mobile. Capcom is converting four cases from the original and releasing them episodically over the next few months. Analysing evidence and cross-examining witnesses is the name of the game – all with a simple interface cleverly adapted for the mobile keypad. We've played the first case, defending Wright's best pal Harry Butz against a murder rap and it's as fun as ever, with daft dialogue and some decent puzzles. The following cases are more complex, requiring you to do a bit of crime scene investigation. The good news is, several sequels are planned for next year and beyond...



Real Football

Publisher: Gameloft | ETA: March

Gameloft's footie series has been downloaded three million times since its debut in 2004 and it's definitely up there with the phone version of FIFA in terms of playability. The 2007 instalment has casual fans in mind and looks set to encourage flashy moves like overhead kicks. Expect an array of international teams, various weather conditions and simple controls. The side-on isometric view, complete with pitch radar in the corner brings the latest console sims to mind. The lad's done good.

Pillow Fight

Publisher: I-play | ETA: May

We'd love to have been in the brainstorming session that led to this kinky take on the 2D beat-'em-up. Foxy girls clamber into the ring then bash each other for your gaming pleasure. We suspect there's a selection of feather-fluffing moves and the visuals are spot-on, recalling the boxing games of the SNES era. Except with soft furnishings. Players will be able to post their scores on an online table. If they're not too embarrassed.



Centipede

Publisher: Glu | ETA: Spring

Nothing sells on mobile quite like a retro arcade hit so Glu has been smart to sign a multi-game partnership with Atari. Centipede, the 1980 shoot-'em-up, will be the first coin-op to benefit. You play a garden gnome blasting insects while cowering behind the herbaceous borders. The graphics and controls have been updated while new themes and power ups bring in a more modern feel to the gameplay. The early results look very promising – just as well, as fresh conversions of Asteroids and Super Breakout will follow...



The Incredible Machine

Publisher: Vivendi | ETA: April

The original Incredible Machine games were massive on PC in the early nineties and now Vivendi has constructed a funky miniature version. The aim is to use pulleys, levers, belts, motors and balloons to build your own crazy contraptions and thereby complete brain-taxing tasks. The mobile version is set to add new game modes and visuals and looks...well... inventive.

Playman Extreme Running

Publisher: Mr Goodliving

ETA: Spring

Free-running is taking the world by storm since Bond gave it a whirl in Casino Royale. If you value your limbs too much to try it in real-life Finnish developer, Mr Goodliving has the answer. Playman Extreme Running features an advanced character animation system allowing loads of realistic-looking leaps, rolls and dives across tough urban environments. The cartoon-ish visuals suggest there won't be horribly mangled bodies when you get it wrong. Shame.



The Deep

Publisher: Fishlabs | ETA: Summer

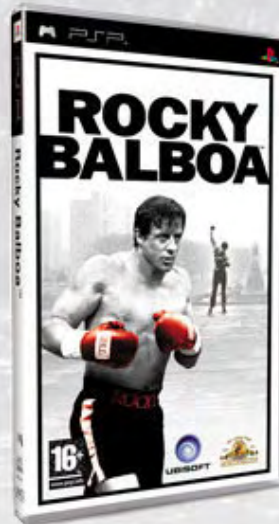
This German studio has released some fab 3D mobile games including the award-winning space blaster, Galaxy on Fire. The team's latest is an ambitious deep sea adventure set on a pirate-infested alien world. The 24 missions range from escorting cargo to exploring the oceanic depths. Oh and blasting enemies, of course. Your armoured sub boasts upgradeable weapons, radar and fishing capabilities. Yes, fishing capabilities.



★ **LIVE THE LEGEND** ★

ROCKY BALBOA

 REPLAY THIS VIDEO

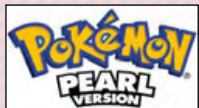


**HE WAS A TOUGH GUY FROM A TOUGHER NEIGHBORHOOD
BUT ROCKY BALBOA DIDN'T LET THAT STOP HIM**

**NOW IT'S YOUR TURN TO EXPERIENCE THE BLOOD AND
GLORY OF THE GREATEST BOXING HISTORY OF ALL TIME**

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Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: Game Freak
Heritage: Pokémon!
Link: www.pokemon.com
ETA: Summer

SPECIAL REPORT

Pokémon: Diamond/Pearl

DS

Welcome to the worldwide Poké Fight Club

It's another kind old
Pokémon researcher.
Well, they're kind when
they're getting you to do
their dirty work.



If there's one mistake Nintendo will never make it's to mess with a winning formula. For those who've played a Pokémon game before, starting Pokémon Diamond is going to seem remarkably familiar. You're still travelling across the world rooting out, collecting and developing these mystical creatures, still using them to fight other trainers in a bid to be the best Pokémon trainer in the world. The kind Pokémon professor, the first Gym Leader battle, getting the bike; all well-worn elements. All back again.

Pokémon Diamond's real evolution, is its support for Nintendo's Wi-Fi Connection, allowing you to fight other trainers from all over the world. It's a tempting prospect, which at first seems to be crippled by only allowing you to battle people with whom you've traded Friend Codes. But actually, having to search the online community for potential opponents spurs you on to discover what there really is to offer.

Since *Pearl/Diamond's* Japanese

release, communities have sprung up all over the internet, centred around the game's online mode. Aside from those indulging in standard, friendly battles, there are cocky users offering prizes for whoever can beat them, risk-takers placing Pokémon as wagers on battles. Look harder and you'll find a massively-multiplayer version of the game's Battle Tower, where hardy

Despite the move into the third-dimension Pokémon manages to keep its distinctive visual style.



Rival trainers often challenge you to Pokémon battles as you travel throughout the world.



Attack effects are
now flashier, often
spewing particles in
all directions.

**"Players are taking the
basic battle mode and
wrapping their own rules
and rewards around it"**

competitors battle to earn points exchangeable for in-game rewards (such as rare Pokémon) provided by the organiser. These players are taking the basic battle mode that Nintendo has provided and wrapping their own rules and rewards around it.

Another example of this ingenuity is the Serebiiforums.com Gym League, run in English inside the importing >

Pokémon
PEARL
VERSION

DS

Pokémon
DIAMOND
VERSION

The Pokémon Company Nintendo

Pokémon
PEARL
VERSION

NINTENDO DS

"Only when you face human opposition does the real potential appear"

The new region of Sinnoh is the stage for another globe-trotting quest.

As usual, the versions only really differ in the Pokémon types they feature.

> Pokémon continued

community. An imitation of the league featured in the single-player game, users fight against appointed 'gym leaders' to earn badges and can even challenge the leaders for their positions. "It's pretty simple," explains league creator Ewan Nicolson. "I made it because it was a neat idea I had, and it's exploded, to say the least."

Although the rewards are nothing more than virtual badges, they are a proof of ability; a Pokéquivalent of Microsoft's popular Gamerscore. But it's not rewards that keep people playing: it's the game itself. The AI in the single-player mode may be competent, but only when you face human opposition does the real potential for strategy appear and the importance of carefully

managing each Pokémon's development becomes apparent.

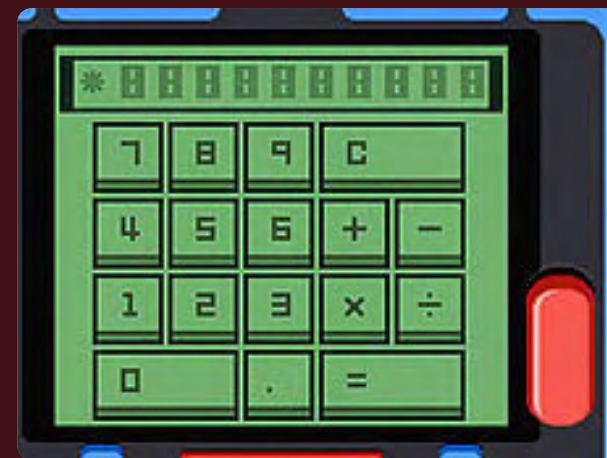
But what about the future? The worldwide release will see hundreds of thousands of new players entering the fray: many of whom, encouraged by the success of Nicolson's league, will create their own tournament styles. Perhaps the greatest worry is that the communities rely heavily on trust. For these events to work players must play honestly: trust needs to be earned, providing a small but significant barrier to entry. "I've seen trust ruined," says Nicolson, "but as long as new people have a place where they can build up respect and show their maturity, they should have no problem."

While it's difficult to foresee the effect thousands of teenagers will have on

Touch-screen usage is sadly limited to menu navigation.

PEARLS OF WISDOM

Essential information for the new Poké age



1. Time To Evolve

2. Starter For 493

3. Getting Ready

1. Time To Evolve

New to this version is the Pokétch, a multi-function watch that occupies the bottom screen. At first limited to showing at-a-glance health information of your Pokémon, collecting applications brings, amongst others, a hidden item finder, an annotatable map and a utility to find nearby Pokémon players.

these groups when the game arrives in the UK, any negatives will be more than countered by the promise of a game limited only by the imagination of its players, a game that will continue to challenge for years to come. ●



HOW COMPLETE?

100%

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

92%

It's out in Japan, it's great, give it to us!

PSP

DRIVER
76

Publisher: Ubisoft

Developer: Sumo Digital

Heritage: OutRun 2006,

TOCA Race Driver 3

Challenge, Broken Sword 4

Virtua Tennis 3

Link: www.ubi.com

ETA: March

"It's billed as a return to the fundamentals of the first title – hard, fast thrilling urban driving"

SMASHING TIME

What happens when Driver meets Stuntman. Head-on.

Driver 76 storms back to the good old days of relentless blasts down narrow alleyways, knocking over boxes, smashing fences and taking the paint off of anything stupid enough to get in your way as you handbrake turn into the cross-town traffic.

There's also a hint of Reflections' other big driving title, Stuntman, in here too. Apparently one of the final missions requires some totally outrageous stunt-style driving, while it's apparently also possible to set up your own makeshift roadblocks with wheelie bins.

READER REQUESTS!
Click here to tell us what you'd like to see in Driver 76

SPECIAL REPORT

Driver 76

Driver goes back to the '70s with a vengeance.

The original Driver, released on PSone back in 1999, was one of the founding fathers of the driving adventure genre, a gritty, expansive urban chase-em-up, accompanied by some wonderfully compelling mini-games. While that, and the following two sequels followed undercover cop Tanner, last year's Driver: Parallel Lines took off in a new direction, with a fresh lead character – The Kid – and a new setting, New York.

Which brings us to Driver 76, the latest in the series, billed as a return to the fundamentals of the first title – hard, fast, thrilling urban driving.

Set two years before Parallel Lines, Driver 76 follows the career of ace mechanic, Ray – mentor of The Kid. "It's very much a comic caper in contrast to the gritty realism of D: PL," explains producer Pat Phelan. "However the realistic physics and car handling of Parallel Lines have been emphasised to

There's a huge array of '70s cars in the game, all with paint jobs from the era.



New EXCLUSIVE Screens



Loads of different New York locations are included from ghettos to suburbs.



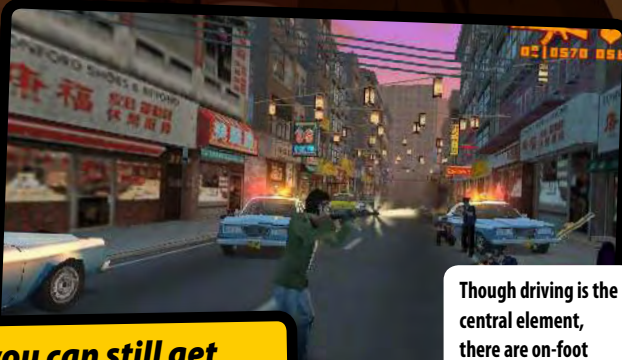
Realistic vehicle damage is going to be a feature, of course.
"Taxi!... Actually, er, I'll walk..."

DRIVER
76

PSP



Looks like massive cop car chases are back on the Driver menu once again.



Though driving is the central element, there are on-foot sections, too.

"Sure, you can still get out, jack cars, shoot stuff, blow stuff up..."



Ray and his partner Slink find themselves up to their afros in gangland trouble.

> Driver 76 continued

provide an unrivalled driving experience." This title is, once again, set solely in New York, but developers Reflections and Sumo Digital have caught the variety of the city, taking in everything, as Phelan puts it, "from the dilapidated docks of Redhook to the industrial wastelands of Kearny and the white picket fences of Englewood".

Importantly, there are still on-foot sequences, but this is a focused game, centring on the strengths of the original – Hollywood car chases and cool vehicles that handle with swagger and crash with gut-wrenching impact. "Driver 76 is about driving," confirms, Phelan. "We really wanted to get back to core values. Sure you can still get out of cars, jack cars, shoot stuff, blow stuff up, etc. But the focus is definitely on the driving skills."

Swap shop

The expansive single-player story takes in a vast 27 missions, spread over six chapters and involving everything from deliveries and stakeouts to street races and protection missions. "We've also included collectables in the game – players pick up stars hidden around the city, which gives them the chance to unwrap bonus items and collectable cards. Some are common, some are rare and you are able to trade these with your mates via the 'Swap Meet' multiplayer mode."

Again, there's a range of mini-game challenges – a key component of the Driver experience (who didn't play the



'Survival' option over and over again for hours?) – and multiplayer modes. Here options include circuit races, across town street races and carnage packed destruction derbies. Players are able to compete for pink slips, so if you lose to a mate, your car is downloaded to their machine for keeps. Sumo Digital is also planning to provide downloadable content, including new paint jobs for your vehicles, which can be customised and upgraded throughout the game.

So this is Driver unreconstructed. But it's also a Driver titled carefully conceived for the handheld platform.

"The key thing we wanted with Driver 76 was accessibility," Phelan concludes. "We wanted the players to be able to pick up the game, get right in and play out a mission without having to drive around the city looking for stuff to do. If you're sat on the bus on a 15 minute journey we didn't want that 15 minutes to be spent just trying to find a Job – so we put the player right into the action."

So get your seventies New York fashion ready and work on that hand-eye coordination. Driver is coming to pick you up once again. We're all going for a little cruise... ●



It's Driver back to its gritty best

"An essential title"
Official Nintendo Magazine
90%

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BEST OF E3

E3

"IT'S ABOUT DRIVING AS DANGEROUSLY AS YOU CAN"

What's so dangerous about Burnout Dominator? In our exclusive interview, we put the questions to Senior Producer, Nick Channon.

Nick Channon Biography

Channon has been a producer at EA for ten years, working on the company's F1, NBA Live and Harry Potter games before taking the wheel of Burnout Dominator.

Burnout is back. In this PS2 and PSP-only edition, developer Criterion is challenging gamers to go for broke, to push themselves and their cars to the limits. But what exactly is Dominator all about? It's time to take it for a test drive...

What were your initial aims when sizing up Burnout for PSP again? What were the first elements you thought you *had* to get in?

Our aim was to produce the best possible game for the platform. On PSP, our focus was to make a huge leap forward with the visual quality, and most important of all, to make sure the handling felt great. We have spent a lot of time specifically tweaking the handling of every car for PSP, and I think the results speak for themselves. The cars are very responsive – you can control your drift and I think the game plays extremely well. Additionally, the team have done an outstanding job of improving the visual quality.

Burnout Dominator seems to be built around those truly classic Burnout moments like just missing oncoming cars, hitting the boost, etc. Is that the key concept behind the game?

Absolutely. The game is about capturing the essence of Burnout which is driving as dangerously as you can and avoiding the crash. I really enjoy watching people play Burnout for their reactions when they just miss a car and are weaving in and out of the

Each car offers a unique handling feel with drift and grip models to unlock and master.



traffic, and we wanted to create a game that really rewarded you for becoming skilled in all these core elements of dangerous driving. This is enhanced with the return of Burnouts and Burnout chaining.

What has the smaller display of the PSP brought to the Burnout series? Is the experience more intense due to the narrower margin of error? Or did you face limitations?

I certainly think that boosting around a track at over 200mph, brings a real intensity on a small screen, but it also has its challenges. We have made sure that the user can read the track at speed and that they can see the traffic. As I've already mentioned, the biggest challenge has been to maintain the great accessible feel of Burnout on the small screen, hence we've spent so much time making sure that the handling is right for the PSP.

Can you explain a little about the signature shortcuts you've added to the game? What sorts of moves will players need to pull off?

Signature Shortcuts are a great reward for doing takedowns. If you can perform a takedown in the barriers at the entrance to the shortcut, it is then opened up for the remainder of the game. This allows you to take an alternate route and should help you reduce your lap times, which is great as you can upload your best times to a website, or share them with friends through the wireless connection.

What kinds of environments can we expect to see in the game? What new challenges will they throw at the gamer?

All of the tracks are brand new and unique to Burnout Dominator. There's a really nice variety of rural and city locations from around the world. All



You can drain your boost bar totally to perform a Burnout and get an instant boost recharge.

The game mixes bustling urban environments with quieter, faster countryside locales.



Expect cutting edge visuals – the team has been obsessive about pushing PSP to the limit.



> Interview continued

of the tracks were built with the game modes in mind, with big sweeping drift corners and wide motorway sections where you can really weave in and out of the traffic.

Dominator features Ad-Hoc multiplayer support. Can you explain a little more about how this works? Will this be one-off six player racers or will there be something like a mini-league or tournament element?

The game will feature Race, Road Rage and Manic modes for Ad-Hoc play, for up to six players. Additionally there are a number of tournaments in the game where users can take part in a series of events against their friends.

We also have the ability to upload high scores to a website so you can compare your best times/scores with Burnout players from around the World, and you can also upload your best

“You can compare your best times with players from around the world”

times to your friends through the wireless connection

You’ve also mentioned the possibility of downloadable content – can you confirm what this will be?

Yes, we plan to release two brand new tracks that will be completely unique to PSP, after the release of the game.

What do you think about the state of the driving genre at the moment? Is it fun to work in?

Clearly driving is an incredibly competitive genre. There are lots of great games available and it’s cool to be involved in pushing the hardware as hard as we can and creating the best game we can for the platform. ●



Publisher: EA
Developer: Criterion
Heritage: Redline Racer, Trickstyle, Airblade, the Burnout series, Black
Link: www.ea.com/burnout/dominator
ETA: March



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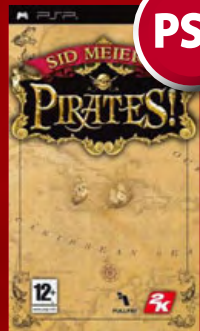
“THE GRAPHICS ARE AMONG THE BEST ON THE PSP” - IGN

“...THE CREAM OF THE ACTION RPG CROP ON THE PSP.” - Games Radar

“A HANDHELD RPG ON AN UNRIVALLED SCALE” - PSP The Official Guide



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PSP

Sid Meier's Pirates!



Buckle your swash – the seafaring classic is back.

In many ways Jack Sparrow has done for pirates what James Bond did for womanising serial killers. Somehow the bronze good looks, female-flooring charm, thick eyeliner and drunken demeanour of Johnny Depp's much-loved character seems to excuse his belonging to a band of murdering, ethically bankrupt pillagers, cheats and liars who'd happily sell their illegitimate babies for a feathery foul-mouthed shoulder pet.

In the same way, Sid Meier's Pirates! presents the lighter, pre-watershed, editorialised version of life as a mangy sea criminal, charging players with sailing the South Atlantic Gulf playing nations against each other to further a dubious but glorious career as a hearty buccaneer – all while trying to find your kidnapped family.

The game is a port of a recent PC title that was itself an update of a 1987 original. But, as you ease the analogue nub to swerve your 90-ton war ship into Vera Cruz harbour, with the PSP's widescreen brilliance offering the bluest and warmest of views, this ageing legend is clearly at home on the handheld. Likewise the gameplay, some of the most compelling we've yet experienced on the machine, ably fools you into thinking this is the freshest of videogame fare.

We are sailing

You begin the game as an apprentice pirate with a ship, sword and a small crew of dedicated sailors. From there on everything is pleasingly open-ended and free. You can sail the seas recruiting crew in various ports, you



Buying goods from a merchant in one town to sell to some mug in another is a quick and easy way to make money.

The English capital of Port Royale (pop. 5600) is bustling with activity.

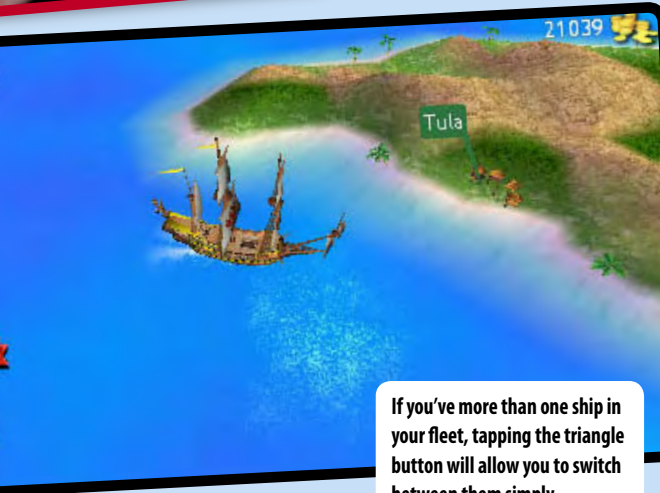
Talk to the Governor
Visit the Tavern
Trade with the Merchant
Consult with the Shipwright
Divide the Plunder
Check Status
Sail away

X Accept O Back △ Select

As your ship approaches, the enemy strikes her colors. A wealth in gold and plunder are yours for the taking!

Target pirate ships principally; they inevitably hold more money than simple trade vessels and sinking them doesn't annoy any nation.

"The gameplay is some of the most compelling we've yet experienced on the machine"



If you've more than one ship in your fleet, tapping the triangle button will allow you to switch between them simply.

CAPTURING SHIPS

Pirating for fun and profit!



1. Cannons



2. Swords



3. Take out pirates



1. With Cannons

There are two ways to take on and capture other ships. Firstly, you can simply trade cannon shots with your foe. Gradually their ship's sails and hull will degrade. If you manage to deplete their stats enough – and before they deplete yours – they will in all likelihood surrender when you then sail close to their bow.



Dance for your wife.

> Pirates! continued

can court local governors' eligible daughters, raid and plunder ships, explore jungles in search of buried treasure and generally potter about making a name for yourself.

Mayhem and marriage

There is an over-arching story to follow should you get bored of the generally aimless but immensely satisfying wandering and plundering. That family of yours won't save itself, so by completing a long chain of tasks, you must rescue them and lay revenge upon the kidnappers. The tasks you complete here are actually things you'd probably inadvertently do in the course of exploring the game anyway. For example, to begin with, you must marry the daughter of a governor. Each city has its own governor and each governor his own eligible daughter. So get in there. This is achieved through an extremely protracted series of courtship events from a rhythm-action dance-off, to a duel with her fiancée, finally rescuing her from a rival pirate and asking for her hand in marriage.

After a couple of years at sea (the game has its own internal clock and the average trip from one harbour to the next takes around two months of game

Buy a pistol and you'll score a slight, perhaps even unfair, advantage at the start of duels.



time) your crew usually tire and so you have the option to divide up the bounty you've amassed and start afresh with a new collection of motley sea monkeys. You get to keep your flagship, which you've likely upgraded bit by bit in the game's various ship yards, while any other vessels you've stormed and taken over must be sold.

Despite the fact that Pirates! features limited quests, only a meagre handful of character models (diversified by skin colour and little else) and repetitive gameplay, somehow the experience remains incredibly compulsive. Perhaps it's because each element is so well balanced, or maybe it's the way everything just slots together so comfortably. Whatever it is, this is a thoroughly engrossing videogame offering free-roaming entertainment in a wonderfully unique way.

Simon Parkin

"Each governor has his own eligible daughter. So get in there"

HGZine Verdict *Smart, colourful, elegantly designed... and not a pimp or Uzi in sight!*



- Brilliant free-form gameplay
- Charming characters
- Reused character models



SID MEIER'S PIRATES!



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DS

Mario vs Donkey Kong 2: March of the Minis

Another victorious march into the world of Mario...

Donkey Kong is the most misunderstood romantic figure in videogame history. When Bowser kidnaps girls he's only doing it to gain media interest. DK really *believes* Pauline loves him and, if he just had a chance to show her how much he cares, she'd be happy curled up in his huge, terrifying hand.

As often happens, however, DK's love has turned into disaster and it's up to Mario to pick up the pieces. It's like an episode of *The OC*, but with giant apes rather than spoiled brats.

You'll notice from the first time you turn

on *March of the Minis* that it demands to be controlled with the stylus, as even the menu screens shake their head at your button presses. This extends to the game itself, a triumph of totally straightforward game mechanics. You control a team of minis and your aim is to get as many of them as possible to the exit. Soon enough, you notice some enemies, and then the objective switches a little to getting as many minis as possible to the exit without them being killed. Do so, and you unlock the next level. And so on.

The game is split into eight worlds, all of which are instantly familiar Mushroom Kingdom locales. Indeed, you'll recognise much of what you see as you play through each level. This, >

Each world has a theme. This is magnet world where you can walk on certain walls. It's an attractive place...



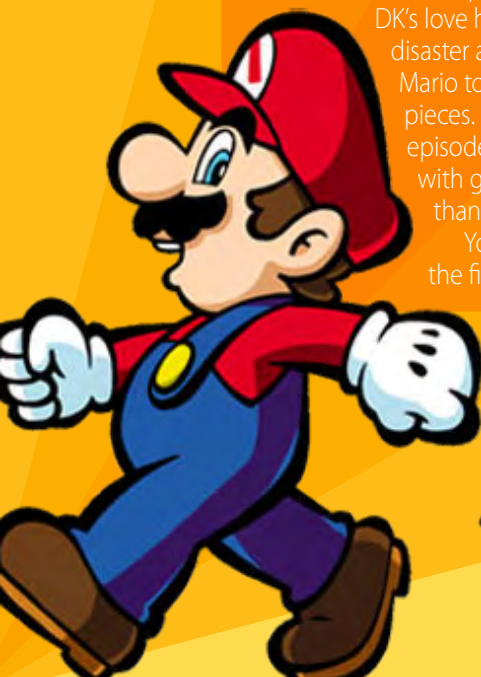
Mario and Pauline at the glamorous opening of Super Mario Mini World.

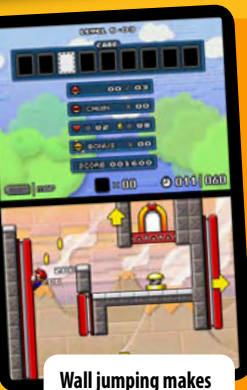


Donkey Kong likes to throw your minis high into the air. So cruel.



"It's like an episode of *The OC* but with giant apes rather than spoiled brats"





Wall jumping makes a welcome, if fiddly, appearance.

> Mario continued

again, adds to the game's easily-understood nature: see a flower in a Mario Kingdom and you know it'll let Mario shoot fireballs. Try it here and, sure enough, it works.

Warp pipes play a cleverer role in making up the puzzles, as you must reconfigure them to deposit your minis exactly where they need to be. Less obvious are the shy-guys, who require you to remember their role in

Super Mario Brothers 2 before you realise you can safely ride their backs without taking damage.

Going for gold

One side effect of all this simplicity is that the main game won't take you long to run through. This isn't a disappointment, however, as it's far from over. The real challenge comes in collecting each level's gold medal, awarded for succeeding with a certain number of points.

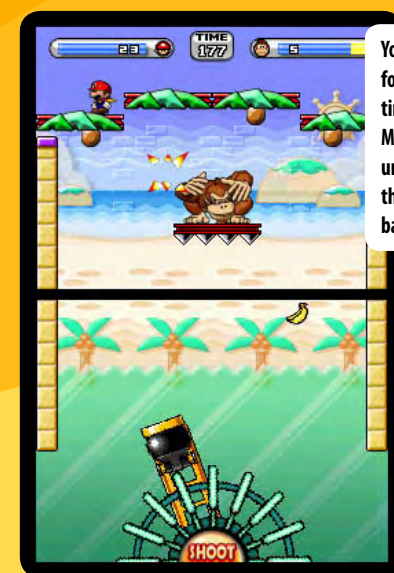
The number of points required is always weighted to look like it's just within your reach, but it's those last few points that are the hardest. This leads you to take more risky paths through the levels, shaving off seconds by timing your passage past a piranha plant rather than blocking it with a bridge. When you die it's always your fault: you got too greedy.

Well, almost. There are a few times when the control system can be frustrating, a misplaced tap too often becomes that famous butterfly's wing, leading to a series of catastrophes and wiping out whole swathes of minis.

The frustration only lasts a moment, however, as you're instantly back in the game trying "Just one more time. Seriously" to get that gold star.

Finding a quiet spot to hide away on the train without being knocked or prodded will become an even greater priority in your daily commute. ●

Robert Howells

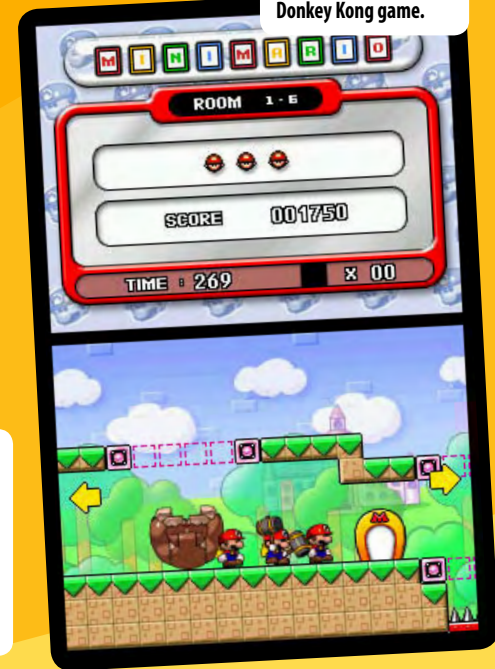


You almost feel sorry for Donkey Kong at times. He's just like Meatloaf, really, in his unwavering confidence that the girl loves him back. She doesn't.

"You're instantly back in the game trying 'just one more time. Seriously' to get that gold star"



Hammers can be collected to help knock out enemies. It's a nice callback to the original Donkey Kong game.



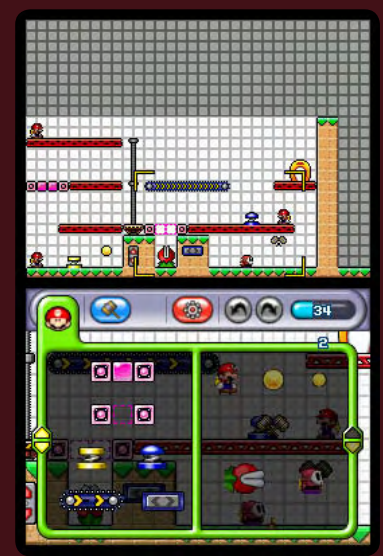
MARIO MAGIC

The little things that we love...

1. Level Design

2. Boss Battles

3. Mini Chains



1. Level Design

The game's construction mode allows you to create your own levels which you can then send to friends, either locally or over the Nintendo Wi-Fi network. Like the game itself, it's very straightforward to use: select and place objects as required. Playing through the main game unlocks more environments and items for you to play with.

HGZine Verdict

A wonderful puzzle game with more depth than the visuals suggest.

DS

- Utterly intuitive design
- Lots of tactical possibilities
- Controls are fiddly at times





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PSP

Ghost Rider

Or, if you prefer, Devil May Cry on wheels.

History has taught us to be thankful for small mercies when it comes to movie spin-offs. Especially superhero movie spin-offs. One only has to survey the burnt-out wreckage of most Superman or Batman games to realise that they're effectively digital Kryptonite, sucking the very life out of their heroic inspirations. So it almost feels worthy of celebration to report that Ghost Rider isn't terrible. It is in fact 'Okay'.

The superhero movie in question here is Nicolas Cage's effort to bring the cult comic book demon hunter to life. But rather than try to recreate the film

setpiece by setpiece, Climax has constructed a game that uses the film's design work yet remains reasonably self-contained.

At the centre of it all is the hot-headed Ghost Rider, who's existence comes about when stunt motorcyclist Johnny Blaze sells his soul to the devilish Mephisto to save the life of his mentor. Unfortunately this means giving up the love of his girlfriend and any hope of going to heaven.

Johnny is offered the slim chance of retrieving his soul, but only by becoming the Ghost Rider – a (literally) flame-haired and demonic purveyor



Rider's chain gets more deadly as you power it up.



GHOST TRAIN

A rickety ride through the story of Ghost Rider...



"A (literally) flame-faired and demonic purveyor of firm-but-fair supernatural justice"

Some enemies are hellishly large. The shotgun is useful here.



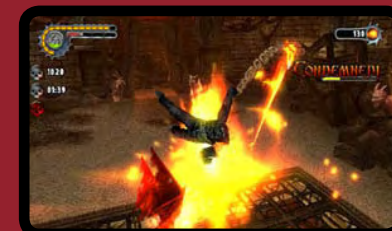
Ghost Rider soon regrets going back to check that lit firework.



GRAPHIC AND NOVEL

New features for PSP?

This PSP game is basically just a port of the PS2 Ghost Rider, the main difference is that each level has its own three challenges – such as a total of souls to collect or a time limit to beat. They are there to add to some replay value to what is quite a short game and are necessary to complete to get the combat upgrades.



Roll over screen for annotations



What's Paris Hilton doing in hell? Her CD wasn't *that* bad...



Using the special finishing moves racks up points quicker.

> Ghost Rider continued

of firm-but-fair supernatural justice, responsible for preserving the balance of good and evil on earth.

This is of course perfect subject matter for a ball-breaking action game. However, to be on the safe side, the developers have resisted the dangerous temptation of coming up with their own ideas instead nicking bits from the best action games around: a pinch of God Of War, a little Road Rash and a great big sackful of Devil May Cry.

Smash and grab

The God of War influence is evident in the Rider's weapon of choice, a bike chain that, when spun and flailed, does a spectacularly convincing impression of Kratos' Blades of Chaos, mainly because the moves are wonderfully animated and are brought to life with some dynamic effects. The Road Rash bit relates to the bike levels which see our hero lashing out at rivals riders on hell-based race tracks, littered with ramps and other fiendish obstacles. The Devil May Cry stuff covers pretty much everything else, from the soul collecting, the style of combat and the structure of the game. We think the polite word is 'homage'.

While we shouldn't applaud blatant borrowing, what must be pointed out is Climax has done a more than competent job of it. Just like DMC your combat is constantly rated to reward you for using a wide variety of

combos – the higher the rating, the faster the Rider becomes which means the action gathers it's own irresistible momentum. This structure lends itself well to portable gaming, making Ghost Rider an enjoyable diversion in short, sharp blasts.

Unfortunately, even though this game gains a lot from DMC, it's vastly inferior in direct comparison. The number of unlockable combos is relatively small, the boss battles are far

from memorable and the single-player adventure is rather too short. Also, the vision of hell offered by the designers is a schoolboy doodle, where this game could have done with an imaginative and scary vision of the underworld.

Ghost Rider is far from being a disaster. In fact, compared to other movie tie-ins it's a minor triumph – just make sure you shape your expectations accordingly and you'll have a blast. ●

Dave Harrison

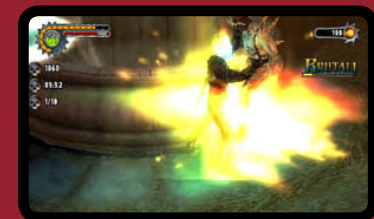
"Your bike has failed its MOT on just one point. It is on fire."



HAPPY SCRAPPER

Education is important.

Improving your combat rating during each level not only builds up Ghost Rider's abilities, it's essential for destroying certain enemies. Some have defences that can only be broken down by attacking with a Brutal rating or above, so it's important to develop your fighting style and attack with variety.



Rider's devastating Penance Stare takes out multiple foe.



BIKE BATTLES

Take your friends to hell...

There is an ad-hoc multiplayer option which allows four players to races against one another on a selection of five different courses. It's far from a refined experience but works quite well as a flashy version of Road Rash, full of wild chain swinging and reckless overtaking. Fun in a messy way but not essential.



HGZine Verdict

Devilishly put together but lacking Devil May Cry's wit and style.

PSP



Wonderfully animated



More depth than you'd think



Environments lack spark

3/5

PCGZine

MASSIVE PREVIEWS

Lord of the Rings Online

S.T.A.L.K.E.R. | Vanguard

MASSIVE REVIEWS

Maelstrom | Armed Assault

World of Warcraft: The Burning Crusade

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

Paul 'locki' Wedgewood talks
Enemy Territory: Quake Wars

"I just spent some enjoyable time looking at the GamerZines' PCGZine. They are proving that print game magazines are becoming obsolete. While you can look at the static pictures of a paper magazine, with GamerZines, what they describe comes to life in embedded video. This is cool."

- EvilAvatar.com

PCGZine

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Issue 2 | February 2007

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Wedgewood reveals all

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ZOOM IN ZOOM OUT TOGGLE FULL SCREEN VIEW

DS

Castlevania: Portrait of Ruin

Konami's whip-cracking series returns in a pleasing, paint-by-numbers sequel.

Typical isn't it? You spend an eternity making your evil castle look as gloomy as possible then, the second after you've had a stake hammered through your heart, some other vampire overlord buys the place up and ruins it.

So starts Portrait of Ruin in which

megalomaniacal blood-sucker Brauner has moved in and decorated Dracula's castle with great works of art.

It's up to you to find these pictures and, like Alice Through The Looking Glass, journey within them to seal the magic inside, sapping Brauner's power and saving the world. As well as the dark lord's reputation with the Goths.

That all comes later though. The first thing you'll notice is that you have two characters at your command. Leaving one in the hands of the capable AI, you must run around the castle, wiping out enemies with your whip.

Eventually a zombie will drop a better weapon for you to equip, making you a better fighter. Brauner will compensate by throwing tougher enemies at you – a merman maybe, or a skeletal bartender. As you defeat them, they drop more items to make you tougher.

And so on.

Castlevania's genius is in how well it disguises this repetition with an incredibly inventive arsenal. Weapons include, for example, a copy of Don Quixote which, when you hold it up to an enemy, summons the titular knight to attack it for you. And they say 18th century Spanish literature is dull...

Combat and carrots

Unfortunately the portrait levels, included to add the same sense of variety to the environments, are less interesting. Even with the multiple pathways of Dracula's castle, the focus soon falls solely on the game's combat system. As this never really progresses beyond pressing Y to attack, you start to get tired of the clever literary references tied to your weapons.

All is forgiven, however, as soon as you are presented with, say, a cool pearl tiara (Look, it ups your defence, okay?!) or a delicious paella. It's real carrot-on-a-stick gaming but, hey, Portrait of Ruin has so many neat little ideas we don't mind if it makes an ass out of us!

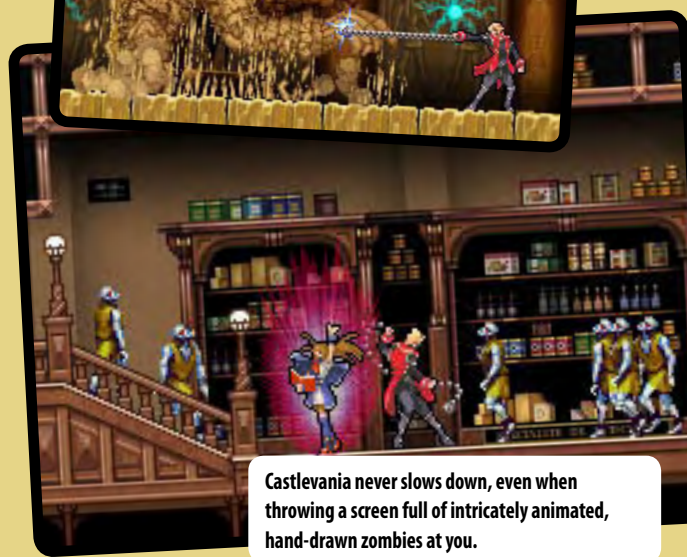
Robert Howells

"Castlevania disguises the repetition with an inventive arsenal"

Enemy monsters come in all shapes and sizes, including 'large', 'absolutely massive' and 'OMG!'



The City of Haze, an eerie Germanic ghost town, is the first level you explore in Portrait of Ruin.



Castlevania never slows down, even when throwing a screen full of intricately animated, hand-drawn zombies at you.

JOINT STRIKE

Jonathan and Charlotte can team up to use Dual Crush Moves, powerful attacks that will clear a room of enemies or seriously damage a boss. Keeping in line with the designers' love of variety, the attacks range from summoning erupting volcanoes to WWE-style tag team beatdowns.



HGZine
Verdict

A worthy addition to the series. Repetitive, but enjoyably so.

DS

- ✓ Varied locations
- ✓ Lots to collect
- ✗ Boss battles are too difficult

4/5

DS

Bomberman Land Touch!

Set sail for adventure! If, indeed, you can operate a ship with spherical hands. And a constant desire to kill.

"Dear Hudson, I've been a massive admirer of your fine work for many years (particularly the N64 Golden Age). Could we possibly have a Bomberman sequel for the Nintendo DS made up of loads of mini-games?"

If someone actually made this idiotic request they should be banned from gaming. Because instead of zipping about in the ultimate multiplayer maze game like the old days, Bomberman

and his companions are now reduced to collecting stamps in a theme park. It's a weak premise, propped up by boring, artificial design. The result is a succession of predictable 'use item here' signposts and mundane characterisation. Oh, the humanity.

Mini and mundane

Perhaps more worth could have been drawn from the mini-game premise if the designers had concentrated harder on the styling. A bit of witty self-observation might have been nice: maybe a game where Bomberman traps himself in the corner of an arena with a bomb

and needs to chisel his way out before it explodes. But no, we've got an array of mostly uninspired tasks, ranging from balance tests, bowling and 'scratch the screen' running to slot machines, rafting and 'wish they'd used the screen better' statue-cleaning, with nary a mad little detail to spur you on. It's all quite competent, of course, but fades to the point of illness when you sit it aside The Rub Rabbits.

Fortunately, though, the proper deathmatch mode lingers in the background, and *almost* saves it: Bomberman's been a multiplayer fixture since '83 for good reason. But sadly this isn't the sprawling end-all Bomberman we wish they'd make (the kangaroos, special bomb types and course design features have all been left behind on the SNES).

There's plenty of variety here, and the online mode is a welcome addition. However, it's hard to recommend this if

you've already got the previous (and very similar) DS version. If you've yet to dabble in dual-screen detonation, by all means, give Bomberman Land Touch a shot.

It wouldn't be too difficult to make a Bomberman game with all the classic trimmings, though, would it? Perhaps we'll write Hudson a letter... ●

Adam Norton

One of the better tasks: frantically drawing coloured fuses.

Four masts? Sailors may question the design of this ship.

Where would a funfair be without a jaunty isometric tilt?

Far too many games pass by without real excitement or indeed any challenge.

The multiplayer mode is really where Bomberman works.

"A weak premise, propped up by boring, artificial design"

HGZine Verdict *Tries its best to defuse Bomberman, but the old spark remains.*

DS

- The multiplayer's still jolly fun...
- ...But lacks cool features
- Lifeless story mode

3/5

BOMBLINE

Turn up, hook up, blow up...

The biggest draw for veterans is the Wi-Fi multiplayer mode. It can be disappointingly laggy at great distance, though. We tried a game against a player in Japan and our Bomberman juddered across the arena as though crippled by fear. Performance improves when gamers are in the same country, so don't panic.

Wipeout meets Top Gun in the game's level designs.

"Barrel rolling away from a locked-on missile is breathtaking"

The auto-targetting is generous. You hit what you aim at.

Lasers and missiles can be picked up by flying over icons.



Publisher: Vivendi Games
Developer: Kuju
Heritage: EyeToy: Play 2-3, SingStar Rocks, Dark Messiah
Link: www.machpsp.com
ETA: March 9

The clever blurring effects provide a real feeling of speed.

M.A.C.H

The first aerial combat game on PSP, but can it hit the extreme G-spot?

Sure, M.A.C.H (or Modified Air Combat Heroes) may be the most ridiculous acronym since the movie D.A.R.Y.L but you shouldn't be put off by the contrived title. Set in the year 2049, an era where air combat has gone all computerised and human pilots are a thing of the past, M.A.C.H sees you competing in illicit dogfights against ex-fighter pilots, mercenaries

and aeroplane loons. Though there's a single-player element M.A.C.H's focus is clearly on multiplayer carnage.

There is a whiff of Need For Speed here (you can even customise your aircraft with upgrades and decals), but M.A.C.H quickly emerges with its own distinct personality. Though there are only two main game types – eight-player dogfights and canyon racing – they have both clearly been tested to death, delivering balanced, seat-of-the-pants action. Particular praise should go to the beautifully honed controls: barrel rolling away from a locked-on missile is breathtaking; jinking in and out of caves is a delight (yes, even with the analogue nub).

While there are other multiplayer games on the PSP this has to be one of the best to date, which leads us on to

the game's major drawback. The single-player experience is simply too short and shallow for us to heartily recommend it. What you get is a series of tournament ladders: Rookie, Pro, Ace, etc., in which you duke it out with CPU opponents to unlock the next tier. These competitions are over quickly, lack any kind of context and while there are some additional challenges to unlock it's all over very quickly. In fact, we finished it in a weekend.

Ultimately this is one of those games that demands friends. Played with like-minded PSP owners (both Ad Hoc and Game Sharing are supported) this is a joy. Billy no-mates should probably invest their money elsewhere.

Mark Walbank

EXCLUSIVE TO YOU

The fact M.A.C.H is a PSP exclusive shines through. Speedy, beautiful and addictive, Kuju has done a sterling job to maximise the PSP's architecture and design quirks. UMD loading times are almost negligible and while the digital buttons can be used to control aircraft this is one game you'll find more intuitive on the analogue nub.

HGZine *Top Gun with friends, a short-lived turkey shoot on your own.*

PSP

- Blistering pace
- Delicate controls
- Not enough variety

3/5

PSP

Dungeon Siege: Throne of Agony

The morning after a vindaloo or something more sinister?

Viewed literally this makes no sense. If you were actually in the position where you owned a genuine, bona fide royal throne then, in all likelihood, you're also going to have some lowly minions to make it a bit more comfortable for you. There's pretty much no excuse for upholstery-induced agony unless you're an evil overlord and pain is necessary to help maintain a suitable irritability.

Thankfully finding the answer to this question won't be the only thing keeping you playing through Dungeon Siege, as this, the latest Baldur's Gate

style hack-n'-slash adventure game to come to the handheld, is brilliant fun. If you've never played one of these games then think of an interactive Lord of the Rings with constant fights. It's all dark forests filled with malicious beasts, eerie towns populated by cloaked strangers lurking in black doorways, and an orchestral soundtrack that drowns every shadow in drama.

Character building

You choose one of three characters to play as through the game (each of 'em joined by an AI companion, picked

from a selection of Dungeons and Dragons-style archetypes). The flow of play is very simple: make your way from location to location, hacking through adversaries while harvesting loot to spend on upgrades. Through winning fights your character levels up – as RPG characters are wont to do – thus unlocking new moves and skills, all while you gather up the threads of a fifteen-hour story. Performing attacks and using inventory items is simple as most are mapped to the PSP's buttons so there's no need to interrupt play in order to root through a menu.

The experience is hampered slightly by the limited inventory space (forcing you to drop items you'd otherwise hang on to) and the occasional mid-animation UMD load, which can break the suspension of disbelief. However, Dungeon Siege: Throne of Agony is visually and sonically brilliant and, crucially, also provides a very solid core of gameplay which, despite its repetitive nature, relentlessly pushes you forward to its conclusion. ●

Simon Parkin

"Think of an interactive Lord of the Rings with constant fights"

I NEED A HERO

But which should you go for?

The seemingly innocuous choice of lead character you make at the beginning of the game has far-reaching implications later down the line. Once you reach levels 30 and 60 you'll be able to upgrade your character to Hero and Legendary classes opening up huge range of possible character types to you. Choose carefully...

Enemy designs are varied and interesting throughout the game.



Your PSP-controlled team-mate provides extremely useful support at times.



Hitting the L-button will use a potion so you never need enter menus to manage your health.



HGZine Verdict *An enjoyable hack and slasher that's anything but agonising.*

PSP

- Excellent voice acting
- Graphically interesting
- Repetitive gameplay





REVIEW ROUND-UP PSP

Chili Con Carnage

Publisher: Eidos | Developer: Deadline Games

When an action game features a young man seeking revenge on the drug cartel that murdered his father with a combine harvester, you know you're in for two things: non-stop shooting and a clenched fistful of spicy black humour. And that's what you get in this successor to console title, Total Overdose. Your aim is to kill as many Mexican stereotypes as possible, as stylishly as you can. It's frenzied stuff, well-choreographed and helped out by an intuitive control system and lots of cool Latino hip-hop. A couple of simple Ad-Hoc multiplayer modes add to the outrageously silly fun and backflip hyper-violence.



- Stylish slow-mo fights
- Good controls
- Not much replay value

Vice and spicy

4/5

TOCA Race Driver 3 Challenge

Publisher: Codemasters | Developer: Sumo Digital

For the latest miniaturised take on Codemasters' excellent TOCA series, Sumo Digital has stripped out the superfluous story stuff and filled the game with raw racing action. Players compete though five global tournaments taking in F1, American muscle cars and Japanese street racers. Handling is exciting, yet exact enough for the small screen and the visuals are lovely, with no slow-down and some great crash effects. Challenging driving tests intersperse with championship races, and there are some great multiplayer modes. A lovingly crafted conversion.



- Masses of races and vehicles
- Great structure
- Not for casual drivers

Real racing, real good

4/5

Metal Slug Anthology

Publisher: Ignition | Developer: SNK Playmore

Fancy some old-skool hardcore side-scrolling shooter action? You could do a lot worse than this collection of seven Metal Slug titles, originally from the arcade and the Neo-Geo console. These relentless 2D classics pitch your lone warrior against waves of enemy soldiers and mega bosses, requiring you to free hostages and pick up flame-throwers, rocket launchers and other more effective weapons than your default spud gun. The levels are sharply detailed and full of sneaky humour, but the pitiless difficulty will put off less committed players.



- Perfect translations
- Great 2D game design
- Extremely demanding

Faithful. Vengeful

3/5

Shinobido: Tales of the Ninja

Publisher: Sony | Developer: Acquire

From the team behind PlayStation stealth series, Tenchu, this ninja adventure bears the hallmarks of that cult series: compellingly crafty sneak-and-kill gaming, but flipping awful visuals. There are masses of bite-sized missions to slice and dice your way through, some requiring ceaseless slaughter, others containing stealing or protection elements. All well and good, but those rough graphics and an unbearably jittery camera detract from the silent, deadly fun. Ninja obsessives happy with PSone-level looks will be content, though.



- Loads of stealth action
- Scrappy visuals
- Dodgy camera

Stealthy but sickly

3/5

Mega Drive Collection

Publisher: Sega | Developer: Digital Eclipse

Retro collections can be a real con – a handful of lazily ported titles with more filler than killer. Not this one. The Mega Drive Collection features 27 wonderful games from the 16bit era including Sonic, Ecco the Dolphin, Phantasy Star II and Golden Axe I-III as well as a treasure chest of background info and developer interviews. Many offer two-player Ad-Hoc action, plus it's even possible to unlock five classic Sega arcade games. This is a real bargain and a must-have for thrifty gamers who love 2D design.



- Over 30 games
- Perfect conversions
- Lots of extras

Mega value

5/5





"We know what to expect from Mario sports games – this doesn't disappoint"

REVIEW ROUND-UP

DS

Pro Evolution Soccer 2007

Publisher: Konami | **Developer:** Konami
(US version reviewed)

The PSP conversions of Konami's defining football series have never *quite* lived up to their PS2 big brothers, although PES 6 was a sliding tackle in the right direction. The DS appearance is similarly solid rather than sensational. The visuals are a little scruffy, and, of course, there are backward steps in the game's realism and complexity. AI is not as convincing as usual either, which limits single-player fun. The addition of Wi-Fi multiplayer is welcome, though, and beneath the

scratchy DS shirt, the heart of PES still beats. This is, after all, a very playable sim. A promising performance, then, hinting at a bright future.



- 👍 Solid football simulation
- 👍 Innovative Wi-Fi support
- 👍 Simplified visuals and controls

Pro Evo, devolved slightly

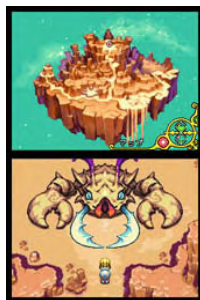
4/5

Magical Starsign

Publisher: Nintendo | **Developer:** Brownie Brown

What makes this very traditional RPG so darn charming? Perhaps it's the strange story, following a group of kids from a magical school who must rocket into space to save their teacher. Or maybe it's the bitterly sarcastic characters and the occasional bouts of physical comedy. Whatever it is, Magical Starsign is adorable. Sure, the turn-based battles might be slightly old-fashioned, while moving with the touchscreen is very nearly impossible. Also, it takes a while for the action to really get going.

However, give this game a couple of hours and you're hooked. Some nice multiplayer options work to complete the fun package.



- 👍 Offbeat story
- 👍 Some really funny scenes
- 👍 A bit dated

Cute and classic

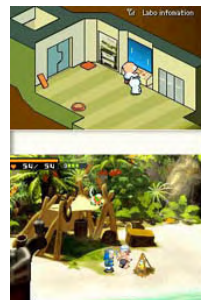
4/5

Contact

Publisher: Rising Star | **Developer:** Grasshopper

This may look like a standard RPG and indeed there are familiar elements – a simple stats-based combat system, a lead character who levels-up after key experiences and an isometric view of the game world. But this offbeat adventure aims to be so much more. Your role is to help a professor find the power cells necessary to repair his crashed space craft – but, although you control an onscreen character named Terry, the prof talks directly to you, the player, smashing down that videogame fourth wall and asking questions about the nature of gaming. Sadly, the experience of

playing often falls short of the promising ideas, with some very traditional and repetitive RPG elements. But this is still a fascinating trip.



- 👍 Incredibly inventive ideas
- 👍 Clever visuals
- 👍 Gameplay staid at times

Experi-mental!

4/5

New Zealand Story Revolution

Publisher: Rising Star | **Developer:** Dreams, Co.

The latest title in Rising Star's Revolution series of updated classics is this faithful retelling of New Zealand Story, the much-loved 1988 platformer. You control Tiki who must rescue his kidnapped buddies from an evil Leopard Seal. This involves, running, leaping and sometimes swimming through a series of bright, busy levels, filled with deadly spikes and insistent enemies. The original was famed for being unforgiving – the modernised

version, was supposed to remedy this. It's still tough though, unfairly so at times and the controls can let you down. For veterans only, perhaps.



- 👍 Some decent news modes
- 👍 Still too tough at times
- 👍 It's not New Super Mario Bros.

Passé platforming

3/5

Mario Slam Basketball

Publisher: Nintendo | **Developer:** Square Enix

We all know what to expect from Mario sports games: familiar characters, intuitive action, loads of knockabout power-ups – and Mario Slam Basketball doesn't disappoint. Thanks to Square Enix, the game offers a selection of Final Fantasy as well as Mario characters, all going three-on-three through various single-player and multiplayer modes. The control mechanic, which uses the stylus to direct the ball, is tricky to learn but soon makes sense as you sail round the court tapping out special moves. The only

problem is balance – all those weapons and power moves make for a confusing riot of b-ball action which doesn't always award pure skill.



- 👍 Lovely 3D graphics
- 👍 Interesting controls
- 👍 Can be confusing

Loopy hoops

4/5

MOBILE REVIEWS

All the latest from the world of mobile phone gaming



Pipemania

Publisher: THQ Wireless
Link: www.thqwireless.com

Your goal in this addictive conversion of the Amiga computer classic is to build pipe systems using the parts that appear at the side of the screen before the water starts gushing. It's a hectic, brain-bending challenge, as you desperately plan networks that'll use all the pieces you're given. And as you progress, the pipes get longer so you need to get smarter. Your free time is going straight down the tube.

- 👍 Fraught puzzle action
- 👍 Lots of modes to unlock
- 👎 Visuals are scruffy

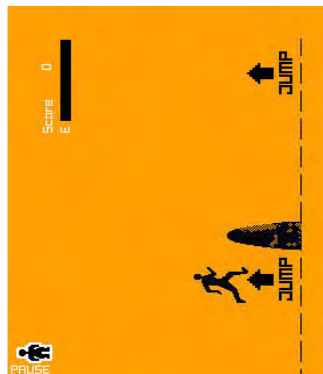
Puzzling plumb-em-up

4/5

NOM

Publisher: Living Mobile
Link: http://livingmobile.net

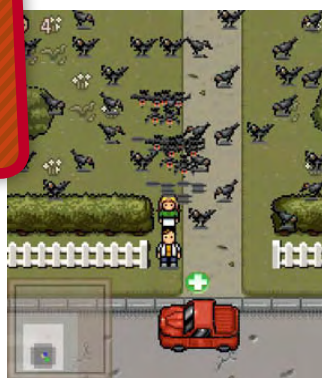
Originally released in Korea NOM is one of the most fascinating mobile games ever devised. You control a tiny man running along, jumping hoops, kissing girls and dancing. All this is achieved with just one button, but you must keep rotating your phone for the best view. The presentation is stunning and there are so many clever, funny ideas you just have to keep playing. An absolute game design classic.



- 👍 Inspired design
- 👍 Catchy gameplay
- 👎 Too offbeat for some

Screen-spinning genius

5/5



Birds: Evil Has Wings

Publisher: Ojom
Link: www.ojom.com

Based, bizarrely enough, around the 1963 Alfred Hitchcock thriller, The Birds challenges you to rescue a series of frightened townsfolk from rampaging ravens. As you have no weapons, it's all about stealth, learning the repetitive movement patterns of the feathered fiends and staying out of their awareness zones while searching the streets and gardens for potential beak victims. It's a neat if simple idea, well-constructed and incredibly tense at times. But whatever next? A Psycho stabbing sim? Quite frankly anything's possible.

- 👍 Interesting concept
- 👍 Gripping tension
- 👎 Not the most obvious tie-in

Odd but interesting

4/5

World Championship Snooker

Publisher: I-play
Link: www.iplay.com

Snooker and pool sims are hugely popular on mobile phones so it's about time Blade Interactive, developer of the well-received WCS series on consoles and PC, got involved. The result is competent if a little disappointing. The table is far too bright, as are the balls, which merge together in a splodge of saturated colour. Still, the control system works well, the ball physics seem accurate and most of your fave players are here. More of a reliable Graeme Dott than a rocketing Ronnie O'Sullivan.



- 👍 Solid on the snooker basics
- 👎 Lack of interesting extras
- 👎 Off-putting visuals

Snooker – not loopy or nuts

3/5



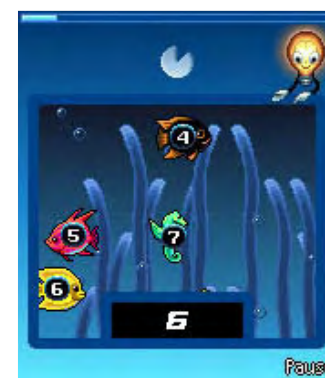
RECOMMENDED
Four mobile games you must own

Project Gotham Racing (Glu)
Breathtakingly good conversion of the triumphant Xbox racer.

Tornado Mania (Digital Chocolate)
Control a tornado as it levels a city. Original and so much fun.

Lost (Gameloft)
Surprisingly fulfilling adventure tie-in with the hit TV series.

Lego Star Wars 2 (THQ Wireless)
Mini version of the already pretty cute console blockbuster.



Brain Juice Energy

Publisher: Digital Chocolate
Link: www.digitalchocolate.com

Brain training games are all the rage on mobile due to their massive popularity with casual gamers. Plus, they must be dead easy to program. Here you get a daily quota of three mental dexterity tasks, based around patterns, maths and memory – stuff like spotting pairs of shapes or memorising codes. As you progress, a chart builds up showing your results and where you're improving. It's in a well-presented little tool to test yourself with on the bus, but it does nothing new with the genre. Glu's Brain Genius remains the mobile brain game to beat.

- 👍 Good daily regime
- 👎 No new ideas
- 👎 Needs more tasks

Not quite brainy enough

3/5

Hands off my Handheld

Watch out - everyone in the family is coming for your console!

Once, it was safe to leave your handheld unattended in the living room. Sure, your dad might sit on it, your nan might mistake it for a TV remote control, but at least no-one was actually going to try and play with it. Those days are gone.

Major publishers have realised something – there is a massive game-literate audience out there advancing towards middle-age, people like your mum and dad. They don't have the time to play big console adventures, but they've grown up with games and fancy keeping their hands-in. What better way than to nick your handheld and pack it in their briefcases?

Take Nintendo's Brain Training. Millions of parents, grandparents, aunties and uncles around the world found it far more rewarding than

scribbling away at an impersonal newspaper Sudoku. Of course, there were lots of puzzle games before Brain Training, but what Nintendo did was cleverly market this one as a brain development tool, not a game, even getting a real professor to devise the tests. It made adults feel okay about playing. Now they won't stop and new titles like Mind Quiz: Coach Your Brain and The Professor's Brain Trainer are feeding their obsession.

Girls and games

The videogame industry used to have a serious problem talking to girls, but handheld systems are helping here too. Nintendogs was a massive success with female players and has opened a new market for cute pet games. This year, we'll see Purr Pals from Crave, Pony

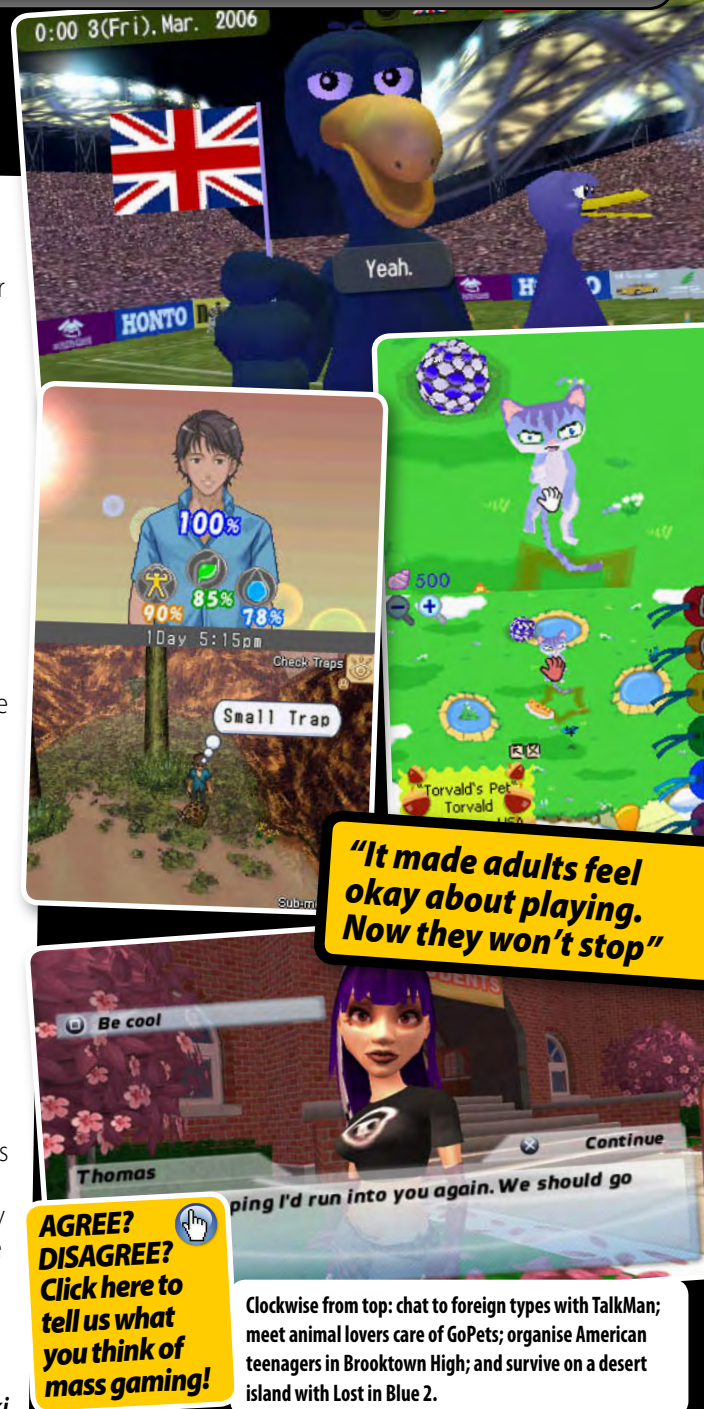
Friends from Eidos and GoPets from Konami, which allows players to meet and chat with other pet owners all over the world via Wi-Fi. Like the barking mode and swapping elements in Nintendogs, this adds a vital social element, which is much more important to women gamers.

Meanwhile, EA has just announced MySims DS – it's a mini-version of the hugely popular Sims series, which, again, has a huge female following. Women like proper plots too, so get ready to lose your PSP to your sis if Konami's school yarn Brooktown High gets a UK release. Your DS won't be safe either – desert island love-in Lost in Blue 2 and the dark mystery adventure Hotel Dusk: Room 215 will see to that.

Software that turns your machine into a portable knowledge system is going to be the next big crossover attraction. You can already get travel advice (Lonely Planet's Passport To... series), language lessons (TalkMan) and cooking classes (Cooking Mama). Soon we'll even get town planning, courtesy of EA (again!) with Sim City DS, which has also just been confirmed.

Handheld gaming offers experiences that enhance life rather than take away from it. That's why everyone feels happy playing now. So while this means more tolerance for your own gaming habit, you'll need to keep your family away from your console. I recommend an electric fence. ●

Aleks Krotoski



"It made adults feel okay about playing. Now they won't stop"

AGREE? DISAGREE?
Click here to tell us what you think of mass gaming!

Clockwise from top: chat to foreign types with TalkMan; meet animal lovers care of GoPets; organise American teenagers in Brooktown High; and survive on a desert island with Lost in Blue 2.



Journalist and TV presenter Aleks Krotoski leapt to videogame fame co-presenting Bits and Thumb Bandits, later covering technology stories for Channel 5. She's now writing for the Guardian and studying for a PhD.

WIN!

Worth
£300

We've got 15 PSP games to give away

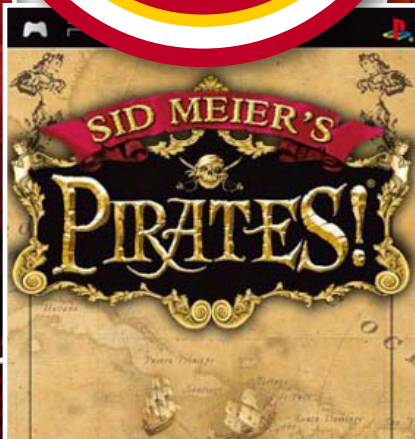
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